To: Point Board and Staff 4/15/97
From: Ty Cashman

FYI

Over the last two years we have raised roughly $400,000, much of it based on a vision of the magazine expressed in the following paragraphs. This is what people have invested in.

- The Whole Earth Catalog and Review have addressed the question of sustainable human civilization for 25 years. We carry today, as we carried then, the commitment to showing a way into the future that is diverse, realistic, interesting, built on personal inventiveness and the best new tools that are available to help us.

- The Whole Earth vision has been to be the voice, the organ, the resource of a widening culture in America which is commited to authentic living in our time, a way of life which enhances an individual's ability to achieve what she or he wants to achieve, which is guided by ecological understandings and a grasp of the wider system of biological/ technological interplay that is human society.

It has never described a future that it wants, as ideologues do. It is based on the darwinian understanding that future cannot be designed from the standpoint of the present, but if the right elements are present and operative in the present, a sorting will occur, a kind of trial and error in which all the elements of reality come in to play. This is our best bet if we want a future that our children will consider an opportunity and not a curse.

If there is any pair of words that state what the Whole Earth vision is, it might be "concrete wisdom." Individual tools, concepts, techniques, books are offered with their pith shown. Along with this is always presented an understanding of way things fit together, the time-flowing structures of natural systems.

Over a year's time the individual reader will have had her or his mind stretched, deep wholesome instincts confirmed, resources offered that once taken will lead on to new skills, thoughts, abilities techniques that will carry her or him forward into the future better equipped, better prepared and more self-confident.

Notes from DK in regard to WER's editorial policy and audience: 4/13/97

The Point Foundation Mission Statement:

Point Foundation is a not-for-profit educational organization which serves as the focus point for an ever-changing, informal community of thinkers and doers.

Through a wide range of media and activities, Point provides a global forum for the demystification and evaluation of world-changing technologies. We are driven by the spirit of a pragmatic yet adventurous intellect. Celebration, community and sharing of ideas are at the core of our values.

Point's purpose is to point the way to tools and ideas that help people think and do for themselves, and to envision positive ways to live and work more saneiy and sustainably.

Editorial policy - WER

I think our editorial policy should reflect the values in our mission statement: we should provide access to tools and ideas that help people make their way forward in these pessimistic times. We have to identify current angles and concerns in the writing we develop and publish. We should search out controversial positions and topics. Focus on how individuals and communities interact and do as we seek to live sustainable and holistically. Avoid sappy stuff like Hope magazine - we emphasize the practical and the far-out. The best examples from our past were how to take a shit in space, turkey-baster babies, and new looks at the insurance industry. Those stories told how people deal with technology, family, or institutions on a very human plane. And they were bold and had new points of view.

We should avoid replicating stuff that is done better already, such as "yellow page" type listing of environmental or activist groups to accompany stories or related subjects.

We need a good serving of humor and culture in each issue.

Lets invent a WER equivalent of a special editorial feature like the Harper Index - something unique that occurs in each issue and that can be quoted or replicated by others. This is a major challenge but could be a major asset for us if we pull it off.

We should definatly create some regular departments or features that appear in every issue to provide some sort of editorial skeleton for the magazine. Its a hodgepodge now.

We have to avoid stories and/or topics that have been well covered elsewhere or that are only of interest to a small sector of our audience - the fiber article is a good example.

We have to loose the holdover thinking: "that's the way we have always done it here" or " thats how Stewart did it" etc.

Re-design the magazine layout so that it costs less to produce.

WER's niche:

WER's niche is to be generalist with a point of view and lots of tool and book reviews. We need to reestablish some sort of domain editors system to get both more diverse points of view and well as some ongoing continuity and expertise. It weakens the magazine to have too much of the material written in-house.

Content:

- original articles
- interviews
- reprints of previously published material
- short misc., 'color' type articles (1-2 pgs)
- book reviews
- music reviews
- technology & tool reviews
- letters
- gossip column
- classified ads
- house ads
- space advertising
- Point Foundation reports

topics:

environment & natural resources
economics, business & money
spirituality/religion
education
technology
community
personal change - death, sex, aging, etc.
health issues
science
international affairs issues
politics/social organization
personal and community enpowerment

Who is the audience for the magazine?

Our current core audience is the boomer generation - people 40 & older who have alternative leanings in worldview, politics, and lifestyle. Solution oriented, open to new ideas, mostly activists or supporters. The Stanford market study captures the demographics pretty well, we don't have to research it again.

Our organization and editorial staff are now dominated by California white males age 50; We will need to diversify if we are going to expand our audience. However, the boomer audience is affluent, easy to target, and there are more than enough of them to build a

If we so decide, we can expand our audience by publishing a wider range of writers that are addressing current issues or ideas and by avoiding too much content from the same old voices.

The Name of the magazine:

Difficult subject: our single strongest asset is our name and identity with its historical and cultural momentum. If we change the name, then we are just another under-funded startup magazine. If we change the name we have to do so in a way that we retain our identity and existing momentum - a difficult task, especially in that we don't have a well thought out new identity.

That said, I have a suggestion for a new name: **EDGE**. It has both ecological, political, and philosophical implications and it is snappy and sharp. How we link it to WER and WEC is something we would really have to think out carefully.